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**Secretary Chu honors INL employees for Japan assistance, nuclear safeguards**

IDAHO FALLS – Seven Idaho National Laboratory employees have received awards from Energy Secretary Steven Chu for their technical assistance in Japan and Kazakhstan.

Employees Doug Burns, Cal Christensen, Betsy Connell, Harold McFarlane, Joy Rempe and Derek Wadsworth were recognized for their contributions to the Department of Energy's response following Japan's 9.0-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami that caused extensive damage to four nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Several employees from the DOE's national laboratory system were assembled to assess the consequences of radiation release from the damaged nuclear power plants, provide technical analysis and advice to U.S. and Japanese government officials to support immediate decision-making and longer-term stabilization planning, and conduct extensive technical analyses in support of recovery efforts.

Individual efforts by INL employees included analyzing near real-time data to help reconstruct the event for emergency response teams, equipping and sending a special robot outfitted with radiation sensors and cameras to monitor and record information, and performing accident progression information associated with core cooling techniques.

The response efforts, performed under immense time pressure and constraints on information, provided necessary information to individuals in the U.S. government who were making decisions that impacted the health and safety of U.S. citizens in Japan, as well as the government of Japan.

INL employee Eric Howden was also honored for leading a 14-year initiative to secure 10 tons of highly enriched uranium and three tons of plutonium that originated in the former Soviet Union's BN-350 nuclear reactor. For 30 years, the reactor was used to produce both electricity and fresh water, but it produced weapons-grade materials as a byproduct.

Since 1996, Howden led the American portion of a joint U.S.-Kazakhstan effort to take inventory, and to secure and transport the spent fuel more than 1,500 miles to a more secure location. The effort resulted in the removal of enough nuclear material to make 775 nuclear weapons.

"The employees recognized today have gone above and beyond the call of duty, demonstrating an exceptional commitment to public service," said Secretary Chu. "Their dedication, knowledge and skills have served to strengthen our nation's economic and energy security and the work of the Energy Department."

During the ceremony, employees received a commemorative statue, a plaque and lapel pin and had the chance to meet Secretary Chu and Undersecretary for Nuclear Security Tom d'Agostino.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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